



LEARNING STYLES: KEY TO ENHANCE LEARNING AMONG STUDENT TEACHERS OF THE B.ED COURSE

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ABSTRACT

Learning styles are characteristic cognitive, affective, and psychological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment. Teachers must provide a variety of learning approaches to successfully lead our students through the task of learning so that these differences can be recognized and provided for in every classroom, this could be through lectures, demonstration, or leading students to self-discovery. Understanding the different ways that students learn, interact with and process information can help us modify the way we teach so that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.

The present study is an attempt to assess the learning styles among the B.Ed student teachers. The learning styles assessed in the survey were Visual, Auditory, Reading and Kinesthetic. The student teachers were administered a questionnaire and feedback for the same was taken. The study revealed that student teachers preferred learning through Reading more effective.

KEYWORDS: learning styles, student – teachers.

Introduction:

Instruction begins when you, the teacher, learn from the learner. Put yourself in his place so that you may understand what he learns and the way he understands it.

(Kierkegaard, 1843).

Learning styles are characteristic cognitive, affective, and psychological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment. To put it simply, one's learning style or learning preference is the way one tends to learn best. It involves one's preferred method of taking in, organizing, and making sense of information. One learning style is neither superior nor inferior to another, but is simply different, with different characteristic strengths and weaknesses. Students preferentially take in and process information in different ways by seeing, hearing, reflecting and acting, reasoning logically, analyzing and visualizing.

Teachers must provide a variety of learning approaches to successfully lead our students through the task of learning so that these differences can be recognized and provided for in every classroom, this could be through lectures, demonstration, or leading students to self-discovery. Understanding the different ways that students learn, interact with and process information can help us modify the way we teach so that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed. When a mismatch exist between learning styles of most students and the teaching styles of teachers the students become bored and inattentive in class, score poorly on tests and get discouraged. The goal of instruction should be to shrink the difference and cater to students' multiple needs.

Students have different levels of motivation, different attitudes about teaching learning and different responses to specific classroom environment in instructional practices (Kathy, 2003), the categories of diversity have important implications for teaching and learning : differences in students' learning styles (characteristic ways of taking in and processing information), approaches to learning (surface, deep and strategic), psychological bases (concrete and abstract perceivers, and active and reflective processors). Students are inclined towards different approaches to learning (Kathy, 2003).

- Students with a reproducing orientation tend to adopt the surface approach of learning that relies on rote memorization and mechanical formula substitution and making little or no effort to understand the material being taught.
- Students with a meaning orientation tend to adopt a deep approach of learning through probing, questioning and exploring the limits of applicability of new material
- Students with an achieving orientation tend to use a strategic approach of learning, and tend to go deeper in analyzing the material, evaluating it.

The concept of learning styles in its psychological aspect emphasizes the result of heredity, upbringing and current environmental demand etc. impacts on different individual's tendency to perceive and process information differently. The different ways of doing so are generally classified as:

- Learning is a cyclic process wherein the learner goes through the cycle of

experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting. Immediate or concrete experiences lead to observations and reflections (Kolb, 1984). These reflections are then absorbed and translated into abstract concepts with implications for action, which the person can actively test and experiment with, which in turn enable the creation of new experiences. The best way a student can learn depends on him/her, and there are different learning styles that work best for them. The teacher has to cater to a variety of activities in the teaching learning process to ensure maximum participation from the students'.

Below mentioned are the different types of learners (Miriam. M, 2007)

Auditory Learners: Students with this style are able to recall what they hear and prefer oral instructions. They learn by listening and speaking, enjoy talking and interviewing. They are phonetic readers who enjoy oral reading, choral reading, and listening to recorded books. They learn best by interviewing, debating, participating on a panel, giving oral reports or participating in oral discussions of written material.

Visual Learners: Students with this style are able to recall what they see and prefer written instructions. These students are sight readers who enjoy reading silently. They learn by observing and enjoy working with maps, graphs, posters, diagrams, text with pictures.

Kinesthetic Learners: Students with this style learn best by touching. They understand directions that they write, act out and through manipulations. They learn by drawing, making models, following instructions to make something.

Research Review:

Rizvi (2004) conducted a study on junior college students' learning styles in relation to their academic achievement adopting a descriptive and comparative method for the study. The aims of the study were to identify and compare the different learning styles of junior college students; to suggest appropriate measures to improve academic achievement by issuing different learning styles. Kagdi (2004) conducted a study of secondary school students' perceptions of teaching styles of their teachers and the academic climate of the classroom. The study included four teaching styles of teachers, viz., formal authority, demonstrator, facilitator, and delegator. Varghese (2005) carried out study on learning and thinking styles of secondary school students and their academic achievement adopting the descriptive method of comparative and co relational type for the study. Carmel, Scott (2008) explores methods of improving the learning styles and outcomes of first year university students within large class environments. The students were exposed to more student-centric teaching styles within tutorial groups, with a view to encouraging deeper student learning and self-regulated learning behaviors which resulted in a more positive learning experience for both students and teachers. Buket (2009) investigates the effect of learning styles on students' achievement in different learning environments designed according to principles of Generative Theory of Multimedia Learning. Bahar, Mehmet (2009) studied the relationship between pupil's learning styles and their performance in science. The study aimed at the degree of the relationship between pupils' learning styles and their performance in mini science projects.

Based on the research review the researcher focused on achieving the objective:

1. To assess the learning styles among the B.Ed student teachers.

Research Methodology:

To assess the learning styles among the B.Ed student teachers, a survey was conducted on 40 student teachers. The student teachers were asked to fill the VARK questionnaire (Visual, Auditory, Reading, Kinesthetic) and rank their preferred learning styles. The data collected was analysed using statistical technique. To determine the relative ranking of the Learning styles quotient, the score of the student teachers are transformed to RII values using equation (Tam et.al,2000):

$$RII = \frac{\sum w}{AN}$$

where w is the weight age given to each aspect of the Learning style by the student teachers ranging from 1 to 5, A is the highest weight (i.e. 5 for this study), N is the total number of samples, and RII is the relative important index, $0 \leq RII \leq 1$.

Results and Discussion:

The mean value and RII values and ranking of the different learning styles are shown below.

Table 1: The Mean and RII values of Learning Styles.

Learning Styles	Mean Value	RII	Ranking
Visual	65	0.32	IV
Auditory	156	0.78	II
Reading	185	0.92	I
Kinesthetic	120	0.6	III

The Mean value and RII values of Learning styles through the Visual, Auditory, Reading and Kinesthetic are indicated in the above table. The RII values are used to rank the Learning styles through the Visual, Auditory, Reading and Kinesthetic. Reading was ranked First and Auditory was ranked Second, Kinesthetic was ranked Third and Visual was ranked Fourth.

Recommendations: Learning styles impact education in the following areas:

Curriculum: Educators must place emphasis on intuition, feeling, sensing, and imagination, in addition to the traditional skills of analysis, reason, and sequential problem solving.

Instruction: Teachers should design their instruction methods to connect with all the learning styles, using various combinations of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. Instructors can introduce a wide variety of experiential elements into the classroom, such as sound, music, visuals, movement, experience, and even talking.

Assessment: Teachers should employ a variety of assessment techniques, focusing on the development of "whole brain" capacity and each of the different learning styles.

Conclusion:

Learners differ and teachers' need to address these differences by catering to the different learning styles through an array of activities that no longer consider students as a featureless mass, but kindles the flame of active, integrative and reflective learning to make learning enjoyable and meaningful.

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